HARAMBEE FLAME

VOL. 1 No. 3 October 1980

THE H.A.C.O. CREED

Together we seek to know
that which is us,
to expand our collective consciousness
of who we are and whence we come;
we exalt in the fact that
black is beautiful in its own right
rather than at the expense
of any other ethnic group;
and in the true spirit
of the Swahili word, harambee,
we promote the idea
that cultural exchange
is germane to human growth.

H.A.C.O. MEMBER HONORED

In the past few months there has been an increased effort on the part of the Harambee Afro-Cultural Organization's executive board to accelerate the educational process in the organization. As part of this effort, the Education Chairman has been making use of quizzes and otherwise "holding class" to give members an opportunity to know more about themselves as a people and to get a clearer picture of where they stand both against the backdrop of the U.S. and the world.

Repeatedly, one person has stood out in showing himself to be knowledgeable and concerned about both gaining knowledge and seeking its applications. What is remarkable about this is that this Brother is one of the youngest, if not the youngest, member of H.A.C.O. At a time when it is too frequently true that young black men are thinking of little more than "getting over" on an individual-and often, self- or community-destructive-level, it is very encouraging to witness meaningful manifestations of true self-awareness, or growth in that direction, on the part of one of our young Brothers-in this case, Cameron Mitchell. Keep on pushing, Blood!

Cameron will receive a certificate of merit at the Oct. 20th. H.A.C.O. symposium, which will have already been held prior to printing of this issue of FLAME.

EXPOSURE FOR BLACK ARTISTS

There is an international quarterly magazine called "Black Art," which is published in California. The magazine contains both text and color reproductions. The mailing address is:

BLACK ART
259 W. Radcliffe Dr.
Claremont, Calif.
91711

RECOMMENDED PERIODICALS

SOUTHERN AFRICA
17 W. 17th. St.
N.Y., N.Y.
10011

AFRICA NEWS SERVICE
P.O. Box 3851
Durham, N.C.
27702

FIRST WORLD
1580 Avon Ave., S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia
30311

COME CHECK US OUT

The Harambee Afro-Cultural Organization meets every Monday at the alternating times of 3 and 6 p.m. If you would like to make a presentation or would simply wish to check us out, contact our sponsor, Scott Marshall, at 471-3161, ext. 396.

WHY JAZZ?

At a recent H.A.C.O. general membership meeting, members were quizzed on a variety of subjects including black music. Among other questions, members were asked to name five black jazz artists. Approximately half of the members were able to list five black jazz musicians. Though the members were asked to answer the questions on their own, there was considerable teamwork, as was indicated by the answer sheets that were picked up. Most probably there was only slightly more than a third of the membership who actually could name five black jazz musicians.

What difference does it make? Jazz is our music. Black musicians gave birth to it, have raised it, nurtured it, and maintained its growth. The Americans/Europeans have their classical or "serious" music and would have us believe that Africans-in-America have no classical or "serious" music as part of our cultural heritage. This is as much a lie as that which suggests that our history began with slavery. We need to know that, just as the white folks have their Brahms, Beethoven, and Chopin; we have our Coltrane, Ellington, and Mingus. We need to know that we have a music of our own making, that is worthy of immortality, that is worthy of our homage. We need to know that we have in our history/in our ranks great composers, men and women who have made and continue to make significant contributions in the field of music.

To know our music is to know much of who we are. To know the greatness of our music is to refute white racism. It is to stand up and say that aint no white folks cornered the market on creativity! It is to challenge the members of the Philadelphia Philharmonic to turn away from their sheet music momentarily and to improvise! It is important that we know that we too have a music full of complexities, music that requires extensive mastery of instruments, and musicians who cannot only play our classical music but can bend and stretch new meanings into/out of it.

But if jazz is our music and it is important for us to know and know about jazz, why is it that there are many of us who are so unaware? The reason is basic. We do not control the electronic media(television and radio stations) which "serve" our communities. And it is by watching television and listening to radio that we get exposure to music and the artists who play it. We hear something we like or see a performance by some musical group or other and go to the record store and buy our records or tapes on the basis of what we have heard on the radio or checked out on the tube. On the commercial radio stations we can hear country & western, "easy-listening," pop music, top-forty(usually inclusive of some so-called "soul" music), but rarely any jazz. There are reasons for this, some of them being: -1. Radio stations generally have a format that calls for songs of approximately three minutes duration so as to allow for frequent commercial breaks. Jazz musicians do not compose or play their music to fit into these convenient time slots. Jazz pieces last as long as it takes for the musicians to finish "saying" what they have to say. -2. The music we hear on the radio is part of a closely-knit network of things, a cycle. One listens to a song that he likes; purchases the record; goes to the disco joint and is made aware of what clothes are fashionable; sees or hears the clothes advertised and buys them so he or she can be hip like his or her peers or like the individual or group whose song he or she happens to dig; etc. -3. As far as radio stations are concerned, music is not an art but a commodity to be marketed. Over the years, radio stations have developed a strong sense for what is "safe" music and they ride with that, while the listening public is fed a steady diet of alleged "music" that rarely challenges anything or provokes anything even remotely resembling thought.

There is another reason why we get so little exposure to jazz musicians and their/our music. Jazz can be dangerous! While the top-forty sounds keep us comfortably sleeping in the land of funk-dreams, romance-dreams, and disco-dreams; the spirit of jazz music can evoke in us feelings that awake us. In the book, FIRE MUSIC, by Bob Backus quotes jazz musician, Albert Ayler: "I've lived more than I can express in bop terms. Why should I hold back the feeling of my life, of being raised in the ghetto of America? It's a new truth now. And there have to be new ways of expressing that truth....I think that it's a very good thing that black people in this country are...beginning to see who they are. They are acquiring so much respect for themselves. And that's a beautiful development for me because I'm playing their suffering, whether they know it or not. I've lived that suffering." Or consider this statement by jazz saxophonist Gato Barbieri: "Can an artist make a revolution? No, you can bring revolution into your art, but you can't make a revolution with art. The revolution has to come by political means. But perhaps music, if it's beautiful enough, can help people begin to change a little bit--begin to change their consciousness so that they will be ready to move in other ways, political ways...."

When musicians or any other artists talk/think this way and their work reflects such thought, the oppressor has a stake in keeping us away from their work. Better for the Status Quo that we be getting down funky than to be getting down strong.

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The HARAMBEE FLAME is a publication of the Harambee Afro-Cultural Organization.
Mailing address: P.O. Box 2500
Lincoln, Neb.
68502

Send contributions of money(Money order) c/o Harambee Afro-Cultural Org. Send essays, news articles, poetry, etc. c/o David L. Rice, editor.

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INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES

From CHANGES:

Today, employment for Black women is strikingly similar to what it was 100 years ago. Forty-one percent of all women who work in laundries are Black; seventeen percent of women in industrial jobs are Black. Twenty-five percent of Black women workers are in service occupations(the census description of women working in hospitals, hotels, or other institutions doing washing, cleaning, and scrubbing.). Of these, 17.9% work in private households as domestics. Of 1.5 million domestics, 98% are women and 64% are Black women.

From MONTHLY REVIEW:

Factors that threaten the development of economic independence in Zimbabwe:

- -Black Zimbabweans are estimated to control no more than 12 percent of the productive capacity of the economy.
- -7.6 percent of manufacturing firms produce 68 percent of total output.
- -Of the country's 15 leading profit-earning companies, 12 are foreign-owned(as are all four banks).
- -88 percent of jobs and 95 percent of output in the mining segment are under the control of foreign firms.
- -European agriculture, which employs 38 percent of the black labor force, has been responsible for 92 percent of marketed output and is, therefore, crucial not only to export earnings but also to Zimbabwe's ability to feed itself.

From THE BLACK COLLEGIAN

The state of black business in the U.S.:

- -Minorities, representing nearly 20% of the nation's population, account for less than 4% of all business activity in this country.
- -Average gross receipts for black business have dropped from $14,000 to $11,000; average number of persons employed by black businesses has dropped from six to four.
- -Black business in America was better off in 1915, when Booker T. Washington last surveyed them, than they are today.

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because none of you
submitted poems.
This page is not
intended to be a
showcase for the
editor's poetry.

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